

# ECUMENICAL PRESS SERVICE

Annual Subscription: \$3.00

17, ROUTE DE MALAGNOU, GENEVA

297 FOURTH AVENUE, NEW YORK 10

Printed in the U. S. A.

Tel.: GRamercy 5-3475 — Cable Address: "Worcil"

under the auspices of

the WORLD COUNCIL of CHURCHES (in process of formation)

the INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY COUNCIL

the WORLD ALLIANCE for INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP THROUGH THE CHURCHES

the WORLD ALLIANCE of YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS

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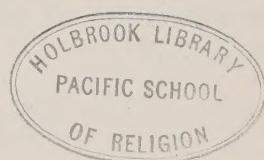
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No. 10

Fifteenth Year

March 12, 1948

## Amsterdam Special



### The World Council and the Orthodox Churches

At the meeting of the Reconstruction Department of the World Council of Churches held at St Cergue, near Geneva, and gathering 70 delegates from National Reconstruction Committees, Dr Visser 't Hooft, General Secretary of the World Council, spoke of the place of the Orthodox Churches in the World Council.

"World Council leaders", said Dr Visser 't Hooft, "realise that the full participation of the Eastern Orthodox Churches in the World Council is essential, if the Council is to be truly ecumenical and world-wide in scope. A 'Western' ecumenical movement is a contradiction in itself. The whole purpose of ecumenical fellowship is to arrive at a vital confrontation between the Orthodox Churches, the Western Churches and the Younger Churches. Many Orthodox Churches have been associated with the ecumenical movement since its beginning."

"The Provisional Committee has, therefore, expressed the strong desire that all major Eastern Orthodox Churches should participate in the setting up of the World Council at Amsterdam. The original intention was that direct personal contacts through delegations should be made with the Church in Russia, with the Ancient Patriarchates and the Church of Greece, and with the Churches of Bulgaria, Serbia and Roumania. A delegation was sent last year to the Greek-speaking Churches and the happy result was that these Churches decided to participate in the Assembly. It did not prove possible to arrange for similar visits to the other Orthodox Churches, but contacts through correspondence and through individual visitors were made — so that these Churches were fully informed of the plans and of the intentions of the Provisional Committee.

"The Church in Russia which has not taken part in the ecumenical conferences in the past, desires naturally to make a careful study of the nature of the World Council. We understand that one of the purposes of the conference of Orthodox Churches called by the Moscow Patriarchate is precisely to discuss fully what attitude the Eastern Orthodox Churches should take to the World Council. It may, therefore, well be that the Moscow Patriarchate will postpone the decision concern-



ing its relation to the Assembly until that conference has been held. The Provisional Committee has already made it clear to the Moscow Patriarchate that, in case no formal decision about official participation can be taken in the near future, observers from the Church of Russia will be welcome at Amsterdam.

"With regard to the question of participation of Russian Orthodox Churches which are not under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate, and many of which have played a considerable role in the life of the ecumenical movement, it should be explained that in as far as these are dependent upon the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, they will be represented in the delegation chosen by that Patriarchate.

"In its relations to the Orthodox Churches, as in other realms, the Provisional Committee seeks to serve the interests of Christendom as a whole - irrespective of political considerations. It will therefore continue to strive for a clear manifestation of the solidarity between the Christian Churches in all parts of the world."

E.P.S. Geneva

#### Is the World Council a Super-Church?

At the meeting of the Reconstruction Department of the World Council of Churches at St Cergue (see page 1), Dr Visser 't Hooft took the opportunity of explaining the general policy of the World Council:

"It is important", said Dr Visser 't Hooft, "to make it quite clear just what this new relationship between the Churches means and does not mean. Precisely because it is a new and unprecedented relationship it is easily misunderstood. Unfortunately some groups in different countries make it their business to spread systematically erroneous and false statements about the Council and continue to do so in spite of the very full explanations and corrections published by World Council leaders.

"The Constitution on the basis of which the Assembly is convened states explicitly that the Council is to serve the Churches and not to control them. And it forbids the Council's organs definitely to act for the Churches unless it receives a specific mandate from them. To spread the idea that the Council is really an attempt to establish a centralised super-Church, is therefore to present a caricature of the plan actually before us. The Council is of course concerned with unity. But it leaves it wholly to the Churches whether and in what manner they want to take steps toward union with each other. And the Provisional Committee has made it quite clear that it does not believe in a centralised type of church-unity in which the Churches would loose their spiritual identity and their autonomy.

"It ought not to be necessary to say these rather obvious things. For anyone who knows the present ecumenical situation - very particularly the situation with regard to reconstruction - must realise that the attempt to force upon the Churches some sort of external control is bound to fail miserably - not only now but also in the future. The whole *raison d'être* of the Council is to provide for the Churches a fellowship in which they remain wholly free in relation to each other but in which they learn together how to render more perfect obedience to their common Lord.



"All Churches in the membership of the Council cherish their spiritual and ecclesiastical autonomy and it would be naive indeed to try to bring them under the Lord Jesus Christ whom in the constitutional basis they confess to be God and Saviour. And so they want to give expression to the fact that they all belong to Him."

E.P.S. Geneva

#### EGYPT

#### The Denial of Religious Liberty

The Committee of Liaison between the Communities, which comprises representatives of all the Christian and Jewish Communities in Egypt, invited a number of prominent members of these Communities to a meeting held in Cairo on February 20, 1948. The principal addresses were delivered by three Christian lawyers, two of them Roman Catholics and the third a Copt.

Christians and Jews in Egypt, remarked one of the speakers, are subject to manifold forms of discrimination. Permits for building churches are delayed for years or refused altogether. No Christian is ever appointed to a higher administrative post. Official pressure is being put on private firms to employ Muslims only. The radio is at the disposal of the Muslim Community for broadcasting the Koran, but Christian services or Bible readings are excluded from the programme. Muslim societies are allowed freely to propagate anti-Christian and anti-Jewish sentiments, whereas any statement which might be interpreted as derogatory to Islam exposes its author to judicial action.

Attention was also called to the difficulties which stand in the way of provision of Christian education for Christian children in government schools. In the "compulsory" schools no Christian teachers are appointed, and no Christian teaching allowed. More often than not, the Christian children attend the Koran lessons, and thus are better instructed in Islam than in their own religion. In the primary and secondary schools, where Christian teaching is allowed, the problem arises of finding teachers willing and competent to give lessons in religious education. It appears, moreover, that it is the intention of the Government to insist on the provision, within all schools, including Christian schools, of instruction in Islam for the Muslim pupils, and the erection of a Muslim place of prayer for them, even though the school is housed within a Church compound.

The Committee of Liaison is alive to the urgency of these problems and endeavours to acquaint the authorities with the increasing dissatisfaction of the minorities, and to suggest the steps that need to be taken to make religious freedom a reality in Egypt.

E.P.S. Geneva

#### BURMA

#### A Blow to the Christian Enterprise

The following news item from the Student Christian Movement in Rangoon shows the serious difficulties facing the Christian community in Burma:

"The University of Rangoon has decided not to permit Judson College, the only Christian College, to be reestablished. This is a great blow to the Christian enterprise. Judson College has served the Christians and others for half a century. It has provided Christian environment to the Christian students and has been giving help to them to have University education. Now all that has been swept off by



this decision. The Christian students are much disturbed by the new situation. They do not see clearly what their next step should be... It is possible that the University may permit the Christian bodies to maintain Halls. But even that is not certain." The Christian leaders are now trying to persuade the authorities to agree to this.

E.P.S. Geneva

### United Bible Societies at Work

The cooperation between Bible Societies (see EPS No. 44, 1947 and No. 4, 1948) has had two recent developments:

a) Bibles for Refugees and Displaced Persons

The agreement reached between the United Bible Societies' secretary in Geneva and Dr Hong, senior officer for the refugee work of both the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches in Germany, whereby all requests for Scriptures coming from refugees and displaced persons in Germany are to be centralised, is now being put into operation. Dr Hong's "very minimum request" amounted to 32,000 copies of the Scriptures in 14 European languages. In order to meet this request - not an easy task under present conditions - a large consignment of nearly 40 cases containing Scriptures in 8 languages is being despatched from Geneva, Russian Bibles printed for the American Bible Society are being sent from Sweden, and further large supplies of Scriptures are to follow from London and New York.

b) An Ecumenical Edition of the Bible

Thirty thousand Bibles known as "Bibles Synodales" are urgently needed in France. To meet this need, 16 tons of Bible-paper have been bought in Sweden with funds sent from New York by the American Bible Society. The paper is being sent to Lausanne where the cost of the edition will be covered by funds raised through an appeal to be launched in the French-speaking part of Switzerland by the Bible Society of the Canton de Vaud. The binding of these Bibles will, for the most part, be undertaken in France and paid for out of the funds of the French Bible Committee.

E.P.S. Geneva

SCOTLAND

Interdenominational Conference on Evangelism

In 1947 a group of men and women from the Scottish Churches attended a conference at Dollarbeg, Dollar, to consider and answer the Questionnaire from the World Council of Churches on the "Life and Work of Women in the Church". Such a spirit of fellowship was then created that a committee was set up with a view to planning another interdenominational conference the following year.

From February 21-23, 1948, 75 delegates from 11 religious groups including the Church of Scotland, the United Free Church, the Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church, the Salvation Army, the Society of Friends, attended a conference at Dollarbeg on the subject of Evangelism. Short descriptive talks on recent aspect of evangelism such as "The Iona Parish Mission", "The Christian Commando Campaigns", "Evangelism in the Universities", and "Oslo 1947", were given and time was allowed for group discussion. At the end of the conference it was decided to appoint a Continuation Committee with a view to the formation of ecumenical groups in different areas in Scotland.

E.P.S. Geneva

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ITALYCentenary of the Emancipation of the Waldenses

On February 17, 1948 the Waldenses celebrated the centenary of their civil and political emancipation. The authorities of the Waldensian Church of Italy received touching messages of Christian brotherhood from Pastor Niemöller, the Council of the Evangelical Church of Germany, the Waldensian community of Germany, a Lutheran community in Hamburg, the Federal Council of Churches of America and the World Council of Churches.

The German messages expressed deep regret for the damage caused by German soldiers during the occupation of the Waldensian Valleys during the war, and "humbly begged for the forgiveness which Jesus Christ alone can give to repentant souls."

The Roman Catholic priest of the parish of Luserna San Giovanni, in the Waldensian Valleys of Piedmont, sent the following letter to the pastor of the Protestant Church of the same district:

"On the occasion of the solemn festival which our dear brethren in Christ are celebrating today with well-justified enthusiasm, I am very glad to renew the expression of cordial sympathy which has bound me to you all for many years in a healthy cooperation... I am glad to seize this opportunity of paying homage to all those among the Waldenses who, in close collaboration with the Catholics, helped to liberate our valley and the whole of Italy from the yoke of the Nazi and Fascist oppressors. It is one of the best portents that we shall be united in the same fraternal way in the struggle against our mutual enemy: atheism, materialism and spiritual servitude in the chains of the totalitarian State."

E.P.S. Geneva

GERMANYChurch Services for Internees

At an interview granted by the head of the Information Department of the Soviet Military Administration, Captain Tulpanov, before Christmas, Superintendent Krummacher and Pastor Grüber had the opportunity to bring forward a number of desires on behalf of the Evangelical Church of Germany. They both asked for an explanation of the fate of the persons imprisoned in the Soviet Zone, and asked for an amnesty for young people in prison. Captain Tulpanov promised to pass on these wishes to the Soviet authorities in that Zone. A promise was given that services might be held for prisoners and internees in places where church buildings existed. Since then services have been held in a number of internment camps by Bishop Müller (of Magdeburg) and Bishop Hahn (of Dresden).

One of the services was held in a big prison-church, which was packed with men and boys. The internees' choir and string-orchestra took part in the service. Religious papers were distributed during the service. In another place the men who attended the service all took part in Holy Communion. The Bishops stress the great interest taken in the services by the internees. The churches have gladly recognised this opportunity for spiritual care among internees, and are planning to hold more services in the future.

E.P.S. Geneva



SWITZERLANDWipking Conference

The eighth Wipking Conference of the Evangelical Hilfswerk for the Confessing Church in Germany was held in Zurich on March 1st, taking as its slogan "The Praying Church". In his opening address Professor A. de Quervain (Berne) pointed out that "during the years of National Socialist oppression the 'Confessing Church' became the 'praying Church'. The most urgent concern of the Church today is therefore to teach people how to pray rightly." The suggestion was made that definite "subjects for intercession" should be drawn up. Pastor Vogt, the Chairman of the Conference, reminded the Conference that regular services of intercession for refugees had been held for a time in a church in Zurich, which had meant a great deal to all who took part in them.

Several pastors, theological students and professors from Germany had been invited to attend the Conference. One of these pastors asked that any special concerns of the Swiss Church should be made known, so that prayers might be offered for them in the German churches. The most urgent concern of all was that "the Church in Switzerland might become a Church which learned through prayer to carry into effect the promise of Holy Scripture".

Professor Karl Barth emphasised how difficult it was to talk about prayer. "There must be nothing set or formal about prayer, because we are 'permitted' to pray. Prayer should be offered in a spirit of joy and freedom. Prayer has nothing to do with dogmatics and ethics. Prayer means growing silent at the beginning and the end of our action". The decisive thing in all prayer is "that we are certain that our prayers are heard. God is helping us in what we do. We are sure that our prayers are heard, but this sense of certainty is not our own doing. It comes from the Holy Spirit. The intervention of the Holy Spirit is the only thing that matters in prayer..."

Professor Edward Thurneysen, of Basle, stressed the point that "prayer must be offered in the language of the present day. The liturgy of the Church must not become a 'prayer-museum'. The right liturgical form of prayer in the Church is the one which responds to the sermon."

E.P.S. Geneva

INDIAEffects of Gandhi's Fast and Assassination

Mlle Madeleine Barot, President of the Youth Department of the World Council of Churches, is the organiser of CIMADE in France. She is also a member of the Executive Committee of the World's Y.W.C.A., in which capacity she went to East Asia to attend the Y.W.C.A. Assembly at Hanchow.

Mlle Barot was in India at the time of Gandhi's fast and of his assassination. An article published in "Réforme" (March 6, 1948) describes Mlle Barot's experiences at that time in the Dominion of Pakistan and the Dominion of India, where public life is dominated by the conflict between the Moslem (who form the majority in Pakistan) and the Hindus (who predominate in India). (The term "Indian" - inhabitant of India - should not be confused with the word "Hindu" - believer in the Hindu faith). The Indian Christians often find themselves in the position of arbiter, and are often chosen to occupy delicate position. Sir Maharaj Singh, for example, has been chosen to replace the British Governor, since he left. The



wife of Sir Maharaj Singh is a member of the Executive Committee of the World's Y.W.C.A.

"It was while I was in Bombay", said Mlle Barot, "that we heard Gandhi had begun to fast. It was then that I realised the influence of this man... It was the wireless which first announced the fast. I saw groups of people crowded round the loud-speakers, which were spreading the news in all the local languages. In the villages, where wireless hardly exists, the news spread from the railway-stations. Five days later, even in the remotest places, the massacres ceased..."

"In Delhi Gandhi was receiving anyone who wished to see him, even strangers passing through. I went to Delhi in my turn, two days before he was assassinated. I attended a very impressive gathering for prayer. A hymn from the Vedas was followed by half-an-hour's sermon. One could have heard a pin drop. The concentration and reverence of the people was amazing... There were some journalists and ambassadors' secretaries there, who come regularly to those gatherings. I felt I was in the very heart of India."

Melle Barot was at Lahore, in Pakistan, when the news of Gandhi's assassination came. Pakistan ordered national mourning for three days. How could they let the Hindus know that the government itself took the responsibility for their security? "Once again, the Christian missionaries acted as intermediaries and, under police supervision, the Hindus began to leave their houses to take part in the ceremony. An enormous effigy of Gandhi dominated the crowd of mixed Hindus and Moslems. A Protestant pastor read the Beatitudes (the passage in the Bible which Gandhi loved most of all). Passages were read from the sacred book of the Sikhs; a Moslem gave the call to prayer, which was followed by an hour and a half of deep silence. One felt that the slightest sound would have caused panic. The whole service ended in devotion."

E.P.S.Geneva

#### Conference of the Department of Reconstruction

The Christian Church was called upon to show "its solidarity with the distress of people" at the third annual conference of secretaries of National Reconstruction Committees held at St. Cergue, Switzerland, March 4-9. More than 70 representatives from 18 nations reviewed the past year's work in church relief and reconstruction and planned for the future at the conference, which was sponsored by the Department of Reconstruction and Inter-Church Aid of the World Council of Churches.

In the opening address, Dr Visser 't Hooft, General Secretary of the World Council, urged that reconstruction aid continue to be given to Churches in both the Eastern and Western blocks of nations, declaring that such giving would be a "testimony that the Church of Christ thinks in terms of the solidarity of man". Reconstruction and inter-Church aid, he said, has provided a "much needed concrete expression of ecumenicity".

Dr J. Hutchison Cockburn, Director of the Reconstruction Department of the World Council, defined ecumenicity to the conference as "every Church's tribute to the Church of God - all the wealth and the power, the strength and the truth, that they can give, and by living together with others and recognising their con-



tributions, learn to go forward together with a new vision and a new hope for the world."

Dr Robbins W. Barstow reported that Church World Service, interdenominational relief agency in the U.S.A., last year had channeled more than \$5,000,000 in cash and \$8,000,000 worth of contributed goods - food and clothing - to Europe and Asia. In addition, American denominations sent almost an equal amount directly to sister Churches abroad, he said.

The Rev. Cecil Northcott, reporting on the work of the British Committee, known as Christian Reconstruction in Europe, said that Churches in Britain have collected more for European relief than they have been permitted to send out of the country. He also described the ministry of the British Churches to the 158,000 German prisoners of war still in Britain.

Swiss Churches last year gathered food and clothing valued at more than 5,000,000 francs, the conference was told by Pastor H.E. Hellstern representing the "Hilfswerk" of the Evangelical Churches of Switzerland.

Swedish Churches collected more than 2,000,000 crowns, in addition to sending large quantities of contributed goods, according to Pastor Göte Hedenquist.

The Rev. Harald Sandbaek described the help given German refugees in Denmark and to European pastors. The Rev. Herbert Newell of New Zealand said that the Churches of his nation recently sent 30,000 pairs of shoes to Hamburg, and that they had sent much food to Britain. Dr Cockburn announced that Canadian Churches had sent \$150,000 undesignated for the Reconstruction Department to use in reconstruction of European church life.

Representatives from several of the "receiving" countries also reported. Dr G. Federer of the German Hilfswerk told how 5,000 tons of wheat given by farmers in America reached Bremen recently just as the Hilfswerk was facing countless requests for help with almost no supplies on hand. Polish Churches were able to help 600,000 people during the past year with food and clothing given through Churches in other countries, it was reported by the Rev. L. Jesakow, of Poland.

Conference representatives were grouped into sub-committees each dealing with special issues. The conference said that aid in the form of food and clothing remains important in a large part of Europe. At the same time, the need for increasing the contributions in cash was emphasised. Evangelism, a new field for the Department, must be undertaken with new vigour and intelligence by the Churches. A proposal to exchange 20 Christian leaders between America, Britain, Switzerland and Germany, Austria, Poland and Finland was presented to the conference by the sub-committee on exchange of Christian personnel. It was estimated that the programme would cost \$20,000. The problems of scholarships and Christian education, Christian institutions, youth work, holiday health, publicity, administration and refugees, and ecumenical loan funds were also dealt with.

Countries represented at the conference were: Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Holland, Hungary, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Switzerland, and the United States.

